

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6497

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 10877

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SGEN, VE

SUBJECT: FY 1976 PEACE CORPS PROGRAM

REF: A. STATE 236947. B. CARACAS 10876

1. BY SEPARATE TELEGRAM I AM TRANSMITTING REPLY OF OUR LOCAL PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR TO REFTEL A. IN GENERAL I AM IN AGREEMENT WITH MR. STEVENS ALTHOUGH I MIGHT HAVE FORMULATED MY RESPONSE DIFFERENTLY.
2. IN CONSIDERING THE ONWARD OPERATION OF PEACE CORPS IN VENEZUELA, WE MUST FACE THE PROBABILITY THAT VENEZUELA WOULD BE GLAD TO HAVE U.S. PEACE CORPS ACTIVITY PROVIDED IT DID NOT HAVE TO PAY FOR IT.
3. WE FIND THAT VENEZUELA RESEMBLES THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IN THAT, ALTHOUGH BOTH COUNTRIES MAY BE VERY RICH, IN BUDGETARY TERMS THEY ACT AS IF THEY WERE VERY POOR. ONE EXAMPLE ON THE AMERICAN SIDE IS THE CURRENT DRIVE WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT TO CUT DOWN ON EVEN THE CURRENT FY 75 BUDGET; AND WE HAVE RECEIVED EXHORTATIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT TO BE ECONOMY-MINDED AND, IF POSSIBLE, PARSIMONIOUS. A SIMILAR SYNDROME OBTAINS IN THE VENEZUELAN MINISTRIES. ALTHOUGH IN FACT DURING THE PRESENT CALENDAR YEAR VENEZUELA MAY HAVE RECEIVED TEN BILLION DOLLARS OF ADDITIONAL INCOME OWING TO THE INCREASE IN THE WORLD PRICE OF OIL, THE MINISTRIES ARE CONFINED TO BUDGETS VOTED BY THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS AND ARE UNDER THE SAME REQUIREMENTS OF
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RIGID ECONOMY AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS AS ARE OUR OWN EXECUTIVE

DEPARTMENTS.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, IT IS FAIRLY SAFE TO PREDICT THAT SHOULD WE COME IN WITH A SUGGESTION THAT THE PEACE CORPS MAY CONTINUE ITS ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA ONLY IF VENEZUELA PARTICIPATE IN THE COST THEREOF, THE ANSWER WILL PROBABLY BE NEGATIVE. IN CONSEQUENCE, HERE ARE MY REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE SET FORTH PARAGRAPH FIVE, REFTEL A:

(A) NEGATIVE

(B) HIGHLY LIKELY

(C) I WOULD REGRET TO SEE THE PEACE CORPS CLOSE DOWN IN VENEZUELA BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN PSYCHOLOGICALLY A WELCOME ADJUNCT TO OUR DIPLOMACY IN THIS COUNTRY. THE WIDESPREAD PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS ARE ALMOST AN ASSEVERATION OF FAITH IN THE FUTURE OF VENEZUELA AND IN MANY CASES THE ONLY AMERICANS THE LESSER PRIVILEGED CLASSES OF THIS COUNTRY HAVE CONTACT WITH ARE EITHER U.S. INDUSTRIALISTS, OIL CAMP EXECUTIVES OR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WITH WHOM THEY RELATE ON A MUCH MORE FRIENDLY BASIS. IN CONSEQUENCE, THE DEPARTURE OF THE PEACE CORPS WOULD NOT SERVE OUR INTERESTS BUT ITS VALUE IS DIFFICULT TO PROJECT IN TERMS OF DOLLARS AND CENTS.

(D) NOT APPLICABLE

(E) SINCE "INSISTING UPON A HOST COUNTRY CONTRIBUTION" WILL PROBABLY BE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY, I WOULD PREFER TO PHASE DOWN SOMEWHAT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF PEACE CORPS ACTIVITY IN VENEZUELA.

5. ONE FINAL COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE A CERTAIN NUMBER OF FRENCH VOLUNTEERS WORKING IN PEACE CORPS-TYPE ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA, AND IT HAS BEEN RUMORED THAT THEIR EXPENSES ARE DEFRAIDED BY THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, AS YET IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THIS LAST REPORT IS CORRECT OR TO DISCOVER THE EXACT NUMBER OF SUCH YOUNG FRENCHMEN AS MAY BE IN COUNTRY. UNDOUBTEDLY, IF THERE ARE SUCH FRENCH WORKERS, THEY WOULD BE YOUNG MEN OF MILITARY AGE WHO ARE RELIEVED OF DOING THEIR MILITARY SERVICE IF THEY UNDERTAKE PEACE CORPS-TYPE ACTIVITIES OVERSEAS. WE SHALL ENDEAVOR TO DEVELOP FURTHER INFORMATION ON WHAT IF ANY FRENCH PRESENCE THERE IS IN VENEZUELA. MCCLINTOCK

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